

look after you

HEARTBROKEN

look after you by HEARTBROKEN

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Genre: Angst, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Angst with a Happy Ending, Boys In Love, Canon Compliant, Domestic Fluff, Fluff, Fluff and Angst, High School, Hurt/Comfort, Idiots in Love, If you only read one work by me, M/M, Mentions of Cancer, My First Work in This Fandom, i mean really fucked up, mostly canon through out all versions, no pennywise because fuck that guy, shittiest parents, skinny love, so 16 going on 17, stenbrough if you squint, theyre sophomores going into junior year

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Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Maggie Tozier, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Richie Tozier's Parents, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris, Wentworth Tozier

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Summary:

"The world, the storm, the galaxy; stopped colliding. It froze. For just a second. Richie's heart didn't beat. Eddie's didn't either."

or

Richie Tozier cares about Eddie Kaspbrak more than he cares about himself. Eddie can't handle his own feelings. Richie has shitty parents.

look after you

Author's Note:

this is unbeta-ed, all mistakes are my own.

all characters are owned by stephen king.

It was late April, raining for days on end and not warm enough for it to feel anything but gross.

It was late April, and Richie Tozier hadn't eaten in three days.

Richie didn't do it on purpose. He never did. But his mom always forgot to buy food for him and sometimes the idea of eating escaped him. The skin on his face had gone pale, the bags under his eyes darker, and his motions seeming awkward and unplanned. He looked like shit.

Eddie was the one to notice.

They were hanging out before school, on the school yard under the overhang, where the storm seemed to be targeting them.

"Stan my man, please tell me you did that chemistry homework," Richie asked as soon as Stan arrived at their area. Eddie was watching the interaction from the bench on the other side of the circle, textbook in one hand and brand-new flashcards in the other.

“Yeah, I did it. But don’t copy the whole thing! I swear she knows every time that you do.”

Richie rolled his eyes, his arm making a flappy movement tiredly as he reached for the sheet of paper Stan was holding out for him. Eddie knew something was up right then, just by looking at him.

Richie looked pale. Sickly pale. Ghastly. His fingers were shaking, wobbling his whole wrist and then the rest of his arm. His words seemed exhausted and his presence felt... bare. Eddie couldn’t believe he hadn’t noticed sooner. And quite frankly, he couldn’t believe any of the other losers hadn’t either. It was so obvious something was wrong with Richie; and Eddie wasn’t about to let Richie tackle it by himself because *Eddie knew he would try to*.

So, Eddie packed away his book and moved to sit next to a scrambling Richie. “What’s up, Eds Spaghetti?” Richie said, glancing up at him for a brief second.

“Eds Spaghetti? That’s certainly a new twist,” Eddie laughed, trying to get some sort of regular reaction out of his best friend.

Richie snorted. “Aren’t I clever. I don’t even get my jokes, they’re too damn *good*. You should appreciate me more Eddie.”

“Well, for that to happen, I’d have to appreciate you at all; and last time I checked I don’t,” He teased, watching Richie closely.

“Damn Eds, I better send out word that I’m looking a better best friend.”

Eddie rolled his eyes. If he could sit here all day and banter with Richie, he would in a heartbeat. Something about the way he knew that he meant the opposite of what he was saying was almost like a code at this point. They knew each other so well it wasn’t even funny. Eddie could write a whole series of books on Richie and not cover everything he knew.

So, when Eddie put his hand on top of Richie’s to stop his illegible scribbling, Richie knew that Eddie was about to say something real.

“Are you okay? You seem... out of it. Like, your whole body’s weak and exhausted but it’s like seven in the morning.”

Richie sighed, thinking of the best way to give it up without it seeming important. It wasn’t a big deal. But Eddie had always been so careful and precise with health that he knew he would flip out, and that was the last thing he needed right now.

“Oy mate, there’s nothin wrong with bein a little bit tired, s’all. Bloody hell Eds!” Richie replied as the British guy, which only seemed to make Eddie more worried.

“Rich, cut the British guy. I know somethings up.” Eddie tried, but Richie did definitely not cut the British guy.

“Eddie, my good fella, it’s not a big deal mate. The Missus just forgot to get some groceries ‘esterday! No big deal!” Richie smiled, although it looked so forced and it wasn’t even like Richie to be so bad at lying.

Eddie’s eyes widened. “What? Richie, when was the last time you ate?”

Richie has bad habits, of course he does. Everyone does. His worst one though, would be the fact that he doesn’t care about himself. He ignores his own issues, even if they’re big deals, like this for instance. Richie couldn’t seem to fathom that other people cared about him. And it sucked because Eddie cared about him more than he seemed to care about anyone else these days.

“Perhaps, maybe the weekend? Cheerio, mate, I’ve *got* to go to class!” Eddie scoffed in disbelief as Richie pushed past him and made his way to algebra II.

Richie Tozier really was something.

Eddie didn’t tell the rest of the losers about Richie’s starvation. He figured if Richie had to bring the British guy out to tell him, he would most definitely not appreciate the rest of the group knowing.

Instead, he bribed his friend with an off period before lunch to go get a burger and some fries. And sure enough, the food was delivered to

him by the end of the period.

“Rich,” Eddie whispered into Richie’s ear while he put his books into his locker, after sneaking up behind him. Richie jumped back, making a loud noise as he dropped all the books he was holding to the bottom of his locker.

“Christ Eds! Could really hurt someone like that!” Richie wheezed out, his hand against his heart and Eddie couldn’t tell if he was joking or not.

“I’ll be more careful next time. But until then, I have something for you,” He said while reaching into his bag. Richie’s eyes widened as Eddie produced his fast food order, his specific one, which was quite generic but still made his heart feel warmer that Eddie remembered.

“Eddie...” Richie whispered, almost in disbelief that Eddie would do that for him. “I- “

“Oh! Hey, my mom is visiting her sister this week, so you’re having dinner at mine tonight. I’ll make pasta?”

Richie smiled. Eddie Kaspbrak was truly the best and most wonderful person he had ever met. “Thank you, Eddie Spaghetti,” He breathed out, trying to sound as sincere as possible because he *was* sincere. Eddie meant a lot to him. As much as he joked around he hoped Eddie knew that.

“Anytime,” Eddie smiled, leading them both to their spot.

Days passed, Richie did eat pasta at Eddie’s house. It was nice, comforting, albeit awkward. There was a giant elephant in the room that neither of them really knew how to bring up.

Richie really didn’t want to talk about his parents. He never did. He always thought of them as a secret, something he couldn’t talk about, something he was meant to endure alone.

Of course, he knew that that was absolutely crazy, but it was how he felt. He didn’t feel like it was a topic to discuss. His mom was an alcoholic. His dad was absent. His parents were never fucking there for him or cared about him. He had to grow up at 11 years old because he couldn’t *live* like a child anymore.

The losers club knew bits and pieces, but he never ever felt comfortable talking to any of them about the fact that his mom got so drunk that she threw up on herself, not able to get up, and he had to clean it up so she wouldn’t suffocate in her own vomit. It was way too heavy. He would never be secure enough to do that.

Which was why, a week later, Richie had no fucking clue why he was outside of Eddie’s house on a Friday night at two in the morning. His eyes were red and his hair was a mess, his cheeks were hot and he felt as if his heart could fall out of his body at any moment.

He felt his arm reach down and grab a pebble, throwing it at Eddie's window. He had no fucking clue why he did that, he couldn't burden himself on Eddie. Eddie was so small and gentle and Richie had never cried in front of him.

So why was he here?

Richie waited, but Eddie didn't open the window. Richie collapsed onto the grass below him, suppressing a sob. Nothing ever went fucking right for him anymore. He gave everything his all and the universe worked against him. *"Oh, there's Richie! What can we do to fuck with him today?"* Jesus, it was getting annoying.

He didn't notice the front door open, and a small, gentle boy walk towards him. He didn't notice until small arms were wrapped around him. He didn't stop sobbing until he heard soft sounds come from the figure's mouth.

"Eddie?" Richie asked, looking up at the figure.

Eddie smiled weakly at him. "What's up, Trashmouth?"

Richie managed a laugh.

"Come on, let's get you upstairs."

Richie was led into Eddie's room by his hand, shaking the whole

time. He didn't think this far ahead. What was he supposed to say now? What was he supposed to do?

Eddie sat down on the floor, the extremely clean one, and tried not to cringe at when Richie's muddy shoes touched it.

He decided that he could deal with a little mud. For Richie.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Eddie asked into the silence, which had previously been occupied only by Richie's shaky breath and the occasional stifled snuffle.

Richie sat, unmoving and unaffected by Eddie's question. Maybe he didn't even hear it. Eddie supposed that was fine too. He would sit here all night and get all the clean floors in his house muddy if it was what Richie needed.

Richie sat in silence for minutes, without moving or answering.

"She hit me," He whispered, not entirely sure Eddie understood under all of the shaking his body was doing. He himself barely understood what he was saying.

Eddie's fist clenched. But before he could stand up and say he was going to call Child Protective Services or even beat her up himself, Richie continued.

“I mean, I guess I kind of deserved it, I was being a brat. She asked me where her stash was, and I said that it was in the same place and I hadn’t moved it, that maybe she just ran out of it because she drank from it more often than she thought about me. She slapped me and told me to be more grateful, that she was doing her best and being basically a single parent was so hard and I didn’t understand. But it hurt Eddie, it felt like reality had just kicked me in the balls that she doesn’t care about me at all and never will and I don’t know what the fuck to do about it so I came here because you always know what to do and I know it’s late and I’m sorry if I woke you but I just can’t bre-“

“Richie!” Eddie yelled, reaching for the larger, shakier boy’s hands. They were cold, freezing almost. Richie stopped rambling, looking up at Eddie through glassy red eyes. Richie’s breaths became less erratic.

“She doesn’t deserve you, Rich. She doesn’t know what a goddamn great person you are. If she did she would never have even thought such a thing.”

Eddie wrapped Richie up in his arms and let Richie sink into him. “Thanks, spaghetti head.”

Richie let himself cling onto Eddie for as long as he needed, until his breathing evened out and light snores replaced his sobs.

Eddie lifted Richie onto the bed, carefully taking off his shoes and his jeans. He debated for a moment if Richie would be comfortable sharing a bed or if he should just sleep on the floor, but eventually decided that if Richie fell asleep in Eddie’s arms, that’s how he should wake up.

Eddie wrapped his own small, gentle arms around the larger, (less so now) shakier boy and stared at him.

After Eddie realized he would die for Richie, it didn't take too much to put together how gigantic of a crush he had on him. Or maybe even more. It didn't matter though now. Richie was in Eddie's arms and Eddie had never felt more right in his whole life.

As the end of their sophomore year approached, Eddie Kaspbrak had gotten his license. And with it, came a new sense of freedom. He was allowed to go drive his mom's car once a week, to wherever he pleased. As long as he came back without even a scratch, the system worked quite well.

Eddie liked to drive on Sundays. Most people were inside their houses, and the roads were quite clear. He would drive to the edge of Derry and back, or to a friend's house to hide from his mom for a few hours. Or he would pick them up, and they would search for an open restaurant and they would eat together.

Typically, it was the later, and that friend was Richie. It had been Bill a few times, Stan once, and Bev once. But usually, he couldn't make himself make himself hang out with anyone but Richie. Not that he didn't like the rest of his friends, he loved them of course, it was just *Richie*. Richie made Eddie laugh, made his heart warm, made his skin tingle and his eyes soften whenever he saw him.

He knew he was in love, he wouldn't be surprised if the whole damn town knew it too. Richie was disgusting, gross, unclean, messy, and frankly a slob; but so help him God if Eddie didn't love every little thing about him. The way he laughed at jokes he wasn't supposed to, the way he didn't shut up even if it was the good part of the movie and the whole theatre shushed him, the way he seemed to trust Eddie with his thoughts, even the bad ones.

Eddie knew the way to Richie's house like he knew the back of his hand. He drove there absentmindedly, thinking about summer and what the hell he was going to do with all of his free time. He thought about Richie, about how he could fill his free time with Richie, but he then thought twice.

Hanging out with Richie had always been a problem.

They couldn't hang out at Richie's house. Nobody ever really could count on being able to hang out at Richie's house. It was too hard for Richie, never knowing if it would be a good day or bad for his mom. So, they just didn't ever plan to be there. Eddie's house was hard too, his mom made it hell and didn't let them do anything they really wanted to.

But they had places, and occasions. They would hang out at Eddie's whenever Richie snuck into his room and was extra quiet. They would hang out at Richie's whenever his dad was home and the house was peaceful, or neither of his parents were home. And whenever neither of those were possible, they had places around town. Inside of Richie's favorite places to eat, the woods, the quarry, main street- anywhere and everywhere that Henry Bowers and Gretta Keene weren't.

As Eddie pulled into Richie's driveway, wondering where they would go today, something felt off.

There was no car in the driveway and all of the windows were closed. It didn't seem like anyone was home.

Eddie furrowed his eyebrows, checking his watch. He was sure that they had their standing plans at 1:00 every Sunday, and it was 1:02 right now. Had Richie forgotten? Was something wrong?

Deciding to check it out, he walked up to the door and knocked on it. No response. After a minute or two of waiting, he tried the door knob.

The house was unlocked.

His stomach felt like it was upside down as he let himself in. He knew he shouldn't just barge in, but this was Richie. What if something was wrong and Richie was dying and Eddie just let him? No, Eddie wouldn't have that.

"Rich?" He called throughout the empty house.

No response.

"Richie?" He called again, now halfway up the stairs.

Again, no response.

Now, he was at the top of the stairs looking at the ajar door to Richie's room. He moved closer to it, his steps slow and unsure. His hand was gripped tightly on the wall, afraid that if he let go he'd see Richie's corpse (even though he knew how insane that was.)

He opened the door all the way, to find his room empty. He let out a breath he didn't know he was holding.

Looking around the room, it did look recently inhabited. The bed was warm and the sheets were crinkled. The fan was on, making Eddie a little bit chillier than he had been. There was a record by the record player, not yet back into its case, freshly taken off.

Eddie sat down on the bed and stared up at the posters on his wall. He hadn't realized how much Richie was into music until now. All of his posters were Metallica, AC/DC, the Rolling Stones, David Bowie, The Cure; the list went on and on. He had stacks of records. Five or six stacks, some more than twenty or thirty high. He had a guitar, which Eddie did definitely not know. And then there was his walkman, and about two boxes full of mixtapes.

He walked over to the box, picking one or two up and began to read them. Some just said things like dates, or months, (*4/12, December, Spring, ect.*) Some had things like *"Listen to this when you're mad"* or *"Listen to this while driving #6"* (Where he obviously had multiple playlists for the same situation.) And the ones that made him laugh were ones with names on them. Like *"For Bev because she's the only cool one"* or *"Because Bill needs to get his shit together."* But there were

ones with his name on it, which surprised him. He'd received several mixtapes from Richie, but these were obviously ones he either planned to give to him or he never wanted Eddie to see. "*Eddie and his stupid hair*", "*Fuck Eddie's shorts*", and "*Kasprak vibes*" littered the box.

He picked up "*Eds #19*" and looked at the songs on the back. Some just the usual that he received from Richie, as in songs that Richie just thought were that good, and some not. Some were songs like "I Want to Know What Love Is," by Foreigner, or "Your Song," By Elton John.

Eddie never thought about Richie liking back. The thought never crossed his mind. Somehow, whenever he thought about Richie he never thought about them ever being with other people, or not moving out of this town together.

He shut the thought out of his mind. Richie would never feel the same way about Eddie the way Eddie felt about him, he couldn't, and that was final. He didn't know what those songs meant but he couldn't ever get his hopes yet. He wouldn't let Richie break his heart.

He set the cassette down and sat back down on the bed, eventually laying back and staring at the ceiling. Richie didn't like science much, but he had a glow-in-the-dark solar system hanging from the ceiling. Eddie smiled, remembering Richie telling him about how it was his Christmas present three years ago and he was so excited about it. Eddie deciding not to ask if Richie had received any others.

And apparently, he had drifted to sleep because he was woken up there thirty minutes later.

“Sir, are you lost? Can I help you?” Richie laughed, sat down on the edge of the bed next to Eddie.

Eddie sat up lazily, rubbing his eyes. “Uh, yes, where the hell have you been? It’s 1:45.”

Richie shrugged. “I was at the store. I wanted cookie dough and I couldn’t fucking find it, did you know that cookie dough is a frozen item? So, I searched for it for a good forty-five minutes before an employee came up and asked if I wanted help.”

Eddie smiled brightly, laughing at Richie. He threw his head back, laying back down and staring at the ceiling. “Yes Richie, I knew that cookie dough is a frozen item.”

“So, you just decided to let yourself in?”

Eddie looked over at Richie, who was looking at him, smiling lopsidedly. “Had to make sure you weren’t dead,” Eddie mumbled, reaching for Richie, and pulling him down next to him.

“Aw, you were worried about me? That’s so cute, Eds.”

“Don’t call me that,” He whispered, beginning to drift back asleep.

Or at least, until he was lifted up into the air.

“Hey! Put me down!”

“You’re cute when you’re mad,” Richie laughed, ignoring the smaller boy’s protests as he carried him down the stairs and towards the kitchen. “So, wanna make cookies?”

Eddie jumped down off of Richie, positioning himself on the counter, swinging his feet. “I mean I guess,” He laughed, watching Richie attempt to take the lid off of the cookie dough.

He hopped off the counter, taking the bin from Richie’s grasp. Richie rolled his eyes. “But I was so close!”

Eddie popped the lid off. “Sure, you were Trashmouth, sure you were.”

“You know, I don’t think I asked for your attitude.”

“Why so offended? Can’t take the heat?”

“Oh, I can definitely take heat. Just ask your mom about last night-“

“Hey! Shut up,” Eddie said, through his laughter. He washed his hands and began to ball up the cookie dough, placing them on the silver sheet Richie had set out.

Richie had reached out, in attempt to grab some of the cookie dough. “Wash your hands first idiot, I don’t want to eat your germs.”

Richie rolled his eyes. “Harsh. I’m wounded, Eds.”

Eddie, deadpanned his eyes to him. “Hardy har har, very funny.”

“Thanks, I know,” Richie winked.

They finished making balls out of the cookie dough, filling up two sheets. Eddie placed them in the oven and set the timer.

“Wanna listen to some music?” Richie asked, as they moved towards the living room.

Eddie nodded. “Sure.”

Richie moved up the stairs, two at a time, and Eddie watched him. He laughed fondly, Richie was such a dork. Was he really in that big of a hurry to climb the stairs? Eddie then laughed at himself. He really was so gone for Richie, so in love that he could watch Richie do the most idiotic thing in the whole world and he’d still look at him like he hung the sun and the moon and all of the stars just for him.

Richie came back shortly, sliding down the railing of the stairs. Eddie briefly wondered where his parents were. It was unlike Richie to be so calm about people being in his house, and his house to smell so much less like liquor than it had in the past.

He sighed, deciding that that was a question for later, as Richie pushed a mixtape into the speaker. *Rock Lobster* by the B-52's came on over the speaker and Eddie fell off of the couch laughing. Richie was dancing, or whatever you would call it.

Eddie thought to himself that he could spend his whole life like this and he'd be perfectly fine. Baking with Richie, watching him attempt to dance- that was all he wanted. Richie. He could be homeless but he wouldn't care as long as this one lanky, curly headed, impulsive, gross, beautiful boy was there with him.

He later found out that his mom had been emitted into rehab. The neighbor had called the police when she'd heard sounds of screaming and glasses breaking. She'd been arrested and then ordered to be put in a rehab. Richie was living basically alone now, even though his dad said he would visit more often- he didn't. Bill had told him all this when Eddie said how odd it was that they hung out at Richie's house this weekend.

"Why hadn't he told me?" He asked Bill.

Bill shrugged. "I don't know. My dad told me, because Richie's dad

had told him over drinks before he left again last week.”

Eddie sighed, deciding not to press. If Richie didn't want to talk about it, he wouldn't press.

Richie on the other hand, hated living alone. The house was deadly quiet. He felt like a ghost, walking past chairs that his mom used to sit in or a spot where she used to keep one of her stashes. All of it was clean now, and it made him so uncomfortable. The only thing that seemed to ease that nervous feeling was Eddie being there, and he couldn't just ask Eddie to live with him.

So, he continued living his life alone in his house, until summer.

Hey Eds, wanna come over every day this week and for the rest of the summer because I don't have any plans at all and I don't wanna sit there like a fucking loser and you make me feel warm inside?

“Hey Spaghetti Head, got any summer plans?” Richie asked, slinging his arm around his shorter friends' shoulders as they walked out of school.

Eddie picked his arm off of him. “No assbat, what do you take me for? My mom never lets me go anywhere.”

Richie nodded. “Well, bet she'd let you hang out if I asked ever so nicely tonight when I'm- “

“Beep beep Richie,” Eddie interrupted.

“Okay, fine, I won’t do that, she doesn’t like it when I bring you up anyways, but if you get bored you know where my spare key is,” Richie said as he picked up his bike.

Eddie grinned at him. “Yeah, I do. I’ll leave my window unlocked incase jerking off gets boring for you.”

“I won’t need to jerk off, your mom will be there to-“

“Richie!” He rolled his eyes. “I’ll see you at Bill’s tonight. And probably tomorrow too.”

Richie grinned as he watched Eddie ride away on his cute little bike, fading into the distance. “Yeah, see you.”

The gang met at Bill’s that night, fully prepared to watch movies, and do whatever they pleased because they were free from school and it was their time now. They hung out in Bill’s basement, laughing about the school year and how crazy it was and making jokes about it all.

About an hour in, with nobody making a move to start a movie, Richie had an idea.

"I wanna get drunk. Or high. I don't care. Could we get fucked up here?" He stares at the gang, which all seem to be debating the idea in their heads.

"I'm in," Bev says. Mike agrees. So does Ben.

"I-I dunno guys. Maybe we c-could some other time?" Bill offers, obviously scared his parents would find them.

"Come on Bill, this is the one of last summer's we have together. Next summer people will have jobs and be researching colleges and it won't be the same, so this has to be the best summer and why not start it off with getting really fucked up?" Richie says.

Eddie moves his arm, tapping his finger on the arm-rest of the couch. "I think I'm with Bill on this one. We have all summer to do stuff like that and... I don't know honestly, it doesn't feel right."

Stan nodded in agreement. "I mean, if you guys want to I don't care, but I think I'm going to sit this one out.

"Please, come on guys, I need just one night, please?" Richie pleaded, almost sincerely. He didn't want to bring up the fact that he lives alone and he feels empty all the time, but he would just to guilt trip them into this. He needed to not feel anything right now. Even if they didn't join him, he wanted it.

The losers looked around, eventually coming to the general consensus

that whoever wanted to could and the others could just sit around. “I g-guess I’ll go find my s-shit,” Bill muttered, getting up and walking towards the stairs leading out of the basement.

Hours passed, Richie was high out of his mind, laughing about absolutely nothing. Bev was the same, and Ben and Mike were only a little stoned. Stan and Eddie had gone and gotten themselves drunk, contrary to their original opinions, but definitely not as drunk as Bill was. Bill was just being savage, whenever anyone talked to him, laying with his head on Stan’s lap and his feet over Bev’s.

“Eds, Eds,” Richie whispered, laughing hysterically while poking Eddie’s face.

“What the fuck do you want?” Eddie retorted, slapping his hand away.

Richie frowned. “You look so cute right now, Jesus fuck.” He then began laughing again, wrapping his arms around Eddie and pulling Eddie onto him. They were the only two sitting on the couch, now laying down next to each other and taking up the whole space.

“Shut up, dickhead,” Eddie muttered, moving his hand out to touch Richie’s hair. He was mesmerized by how soft it was. You’d expect it to be dirty and greasy, but it wasn’t. Richie’s curls were soft as hell and Eddie was about to have a heart attack because Richie was so damn close and Jesus fucking Christ why was he looking at Eddie like that?

“Make me.”

Eddie narrowed his eyes, but Richie's expression hadn't changed. He was staring straight into Eddie's soul, mesmerizing his eyes and the shape of his lips. "In your dreams, Trashmouth."

Richie sighed. "Yeah, in my dreams." Then he began to laugh again

Eddie shifted uncomfortably because *Richie was still looking at him like that*. "Will you stop?"

"Stop what, Eds?"

Eddie groaned. "Don't call me that. And, stop looking at me like that."

Richie moved his head, and faced away from Eddie. "This better?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" Richie yelled, as he fell off of the couch and onto Bev. Richie said, "Oh, hi Bev! I was just talking to Eddie, but he got all grumpy and now I'm down here. Funny how that works!" And then began to laugh hysterically. Which in turn, made Bev do the same thing.

"Eddie did you push him?" Bev asked, turning her head through her laughter.

“No, I wish I had though,” Eddie grumbled, reaching his hand out for Richie because he missed the warmth that his body had given him.

Bev laughed even harder. “Aw, Eddie don’t be mean.”

Eddie snorted, then finally latched his hand onto Richie’s. “Eddie come down here.”

“No.”

“Oh, oops,” Richie said, as he tugged Eddie off of the couch in the same manner he’d fallen off himself. Then, he began to laugh so hard tears were forming as Eddie landed on Bill’s legs.

“Watch w-where you’re falling Kaspbrak!” Bill shouted.

Eddie rolled over next to Richie. “I’m sorry Bill, Richie made me.”

“Sure,” Bill muttered, then began to talk about whatever it was he was talking about to Stan again.

Richie lunged over to Eddie, beginning to pepper his cheek in kisses. “Richie, stop,” Eddie mumbled, but made no attempt to move.

Abruptly, Richie stopped and looked at Eddie again. “Cute cute *cute*, Eds. Stop being cute.”

Eddie’s face turned crimson as he latched his hand onto Richie’s. “I’ll do my best,” He mumbled against Richie’s back because apparently Richie was going to bed now and apparently, they’re spooning, and apparently Richie is the little spoon. Which didn’t last long, because not three minutes later Richie flipped himself over Eddie and became the big spoon, falling asleep with a smile on his face and his hand interlaced with Eddie’s.

And that’s how they woke up. The whole group was piled on top of one another, but Eddie was literally entrapped in Richie’s whole body. There was not a single cell on his body that wasn’t touching Richie. And Eddie couldn’t say he minded. His head pounded, but he stayed there, in Richie’s arms, because it wouldn’t feel right if he left them.

God, was he fucked.

Eddie loved Richie so goddamn much it made his whole entire body ache. He felt numb, and at the same time he felt everything, looking at the mere pattern of the freckles on Richie’s hand. He didn’t even dare to breathe until he felt that hand move, pulling him closer into the larger boy. “Morning, Eds,” He heard Richie grumble into his hair. What he didn’t expect, was the kiss that was planted onto his shoulder.

He didn’t tense up, as he probably should’ve if his best friend just fucking kissed his shoulder, platonically or not, but instead he melted into it. “Good morning,” he mumbled back.

They didn't break apart, just breathing into each other until Ben sat up. Which was when Richie removed one of his arms and Eddie scooted a little further away. "Anyone know where Bill keeps his aspirin?" Ben asked, way too loudly if you'd asked Eddie.

"Yeah, follow me," Richie said, standing up.

"Bring me back some, please, like the whole bottle," Eddie requested, looking at Richie while rubbing his hand on his head.

Richie nodded at him. "Will do."

And with that, Eddie was left there at the bottom of a pit of love for Richie Tozier and a broken heart because he could never be with him.

Eddie left Bill's house at around noon that day, fully intending to go home. What he didn't expect, was to get barely out of the driveway and then hear Richie yelling for him to stop.

"Wait! Eddie! Eds! Jesus, you're fast. Fast car. Hard to catch. Where you off to in such a rush?" Richie asked, panting. He was so out of breath, Eddie wondered why he would put himself through such physical pain to catch up to Eddie.

“Home, most likely.”

“Ah, that’s what I thought. So, um, do you think you’d wanna go to my home instead of yours? And hang out?” Richie chewed on the bottom of his lip, playing with the hem of his shirt absentmindedly.

Eddie shrugged. “Why not?”

So, they made their way out to Richie’s house.

Richie’s house was quite large. Two stories and a basement, large open rooms, white walls, and big back windows. Of course, the curtains always used to be shut and the floor was months overdue for a cleaning, but even then, it was still huge. Way too huge for just one person and the occasional presence of that person’s dad.

After they parked Eddie’s car and lifted Richie’s bike out of the back, they made their way inside in silence.

The door shut, and Eddie looked around. The house looked the same as it had the last time he was over, alien, and unfamiliar. Strange.

“Want to help me clean?”

Eddie turned his head to face Richie, who was smiling holding up a

mop and a broom. “If it means you’ll shower more than four times a week.”

Richie smiled. “Deal!”

So, they set off. Richie put on his “*cleaning #2*” mixtape and they were cleaning his house. Lots of little “Richie that’s not how you use a vacuum,” and “Eds you’ve scrubbed it for 10 minutes leave my floors alone” happened but it didn’t matter because by 4pm, half the house was clean and they were having fun.

Come on Eileen played in the background, as Richie ran around shouting the lyrics. “COME ON EILEEN! OH, I SWEAR WHAT HE MEANS! AT THIS MOMENT, YOU MEAN EVVERYYYTHINGGG!” He yelled, as Eddie fell into fits of laughter on the stairs.

“YOU IN THAT DRESS! MY THOUGHTS I CONFESS! VERGE ON DIRTY,” Richie winked, as he ran for Eddie and grabbed his arms to swing them around.

And all Eddie could think, while he watched, that Richie Tozier must be an angel. Nobody else could just fucking *smile* like that and have the sunlight hit them and look goddamn gorgeous while singing so far offkey.

He was so busy with his thoughts, that he didn’t expect it when Richie picked him up by his arms and began to swing him around. You could probably call it dancing, but it certainly didn’t feel like that’s what they were doing. They were just moving, moving around the house, moving in patters, never letting their arms break apart. And it felt *right*.

Eventually, the sun began to set. The sun always set super late in Derry, but it was about 8:30PM and somehow Eddie Kaspbrak had spent a whole day doing absolutely nothing with Richie Tozier except attempt to clean up Richie's slob overflow, yet it was still fucking great. Richie made life so much more fun, so much more exhilarating.

Eddie wasn't worried about his mom. He had called her in the morning, and honestly didn't care if she was mad at him. He made no move to imply he was even thinking about going home.

Richie, on the other hand, was worried about his mom and he showed it. He had visibly become less stable throughout the day, but he didn't want to make a big deal about it. Eddie would worry. Eddie shouldn't worry about him.

"We should bring some red vines and a blanket up to the roof and watch the sun set," Richie heard Eddie say from a chair in the sitting room. Richie was in the kitchen, trying to figure out what to eat for dinner.

Richie's exterior seemed to brighten up at the idea. "Sounds like a plan, spaghetti man," He replied, grabbing the tub of red vines from the pantry as Eddie grabbed a few blankets off the couch. Richie led them up the stairs and out his parents' bedroom window, so they could see it well.

And wow, was it a sight. Out of all the sunsets in the world, Maine

had some pretty damn good ones. Deep oranges painted the sky, fading into purple and navy blue on the other side and making the whole universe look like a painting. But Eddie didn't care about the sky at all, he was fascinated by the masterpiece that was Richie Tozier.

Silence comes over them for a while, before Richie opened his mouth.

"My mom's in rehab," He says, almost in a whisper, on his back facing the sky.

Eddie stiffened. God, how he would kill to kiss all of Richie's pain away. "Good."

Richie sighed. "I know that's where she should be, but like, she's still my *mom*..."

"Sometimes I feel like I should put my mom in the mental hospital," Eddie admitted, turning on his side to face Richie, who was gnawing on a red vine.

Richie turned too, to face Eddie. "Why are our parents so shitty?" He asked, moving closer to Eddie and handing him a red vine, while grabbing himself another.

"I wish I knew Rich, I wish I knew."

Richie stared behind Eddie for a while, at the sky and how huge it was.

“Would you run away with me? If I asked? Not that I’m asking, but hypothetically, if I did, would you?”

Eddie sucked in a breath. *Of course, I would, I would die for you, I love you more than I’ve ever loved anything and “hypothetically” I would follow you until the end of the Earth.* “Yeah, I think I would Richie.”

Richie smiled at him, staring at him and he was looking at Eddie like that again and Eddie was staring straight back, trying to burn the image of Richie with the sunset looking at him down to every single freckle. He almost hadn’t noticed that Richie had moved closer and closer and closer, until their faces were inches apart.

Eddie held his breath. He blinked and searched Richie’s eyes for any sign of a joke and he almost had a heart attack when he didn’t find any.

As if to signal that this was what he wanted, Richie looked at Eddie’s lips and then back up to his eyes. Eddie moved even closer and it felt like all of the oceans had stood still, as if time had stood still, as if the whole world froze-

But it hadn’t.

“RICHIE? I’M HOME!” Called a voice, the voice of Richie’s father.

Eddie flung himself backwards as fast as humanly possible, his heart going three miles a second.

Richie shot back inside, Eddie behind him.

“Here!” Richie yelled back, his voice cracking a bit in panic.

Eddie could not, would not, have a breakdown in front of Richie. Not this time. “I have to go,” He whispered, taking Richie’s stairs two at a time as he shot past Richie’s dad, out the door, and sped his way home.

It wasn’t until he was laying on his bed with his inhaler that he could remember the way that Richie looked at him, and that was the only reason he slept that night.

Eddie ignored his phone for a week. He went out on multiple occasions, to the library and the grocery store and he started his summer work. But he very pointedly avoided Richie and tried to force the overwhelming feeling in his heart away, but it didn’t let up.

It felt like somebody was holding Eddie’s heart and shaking it around. He felt sick, like enough to go to the hospital. His mom was worried, about Eddie’s loss of appetite and seemingly impossible will to bite his nails clean off. He felt numb; except for the giant ache in his heart.

Richie was worse.

His dad yelled at him often and cried about Richie's mom, all while living in the house still. Richie could barely breathe. Normally, he would just call Eddie and tell him stupid jokes that he found in a joke book, listening to the sound of Eddie's voice as he snapped back or the laughter when he'd found a good one.

He felt like he was dying. Bill and Bev had visited, each on separate occasions. They knew that Richie was being eaten alive by his own thoughts, but bringing it up only seemed to push him further away. So, they didn't.

A week passed like this. Then all of the losers all decided to go to a party.

It was Bev who'd been invited in the first place, some guy from a vinyl record shop thought that she was pretty and asked for her number. He'd invited her to this party at somebody's house, and of course she invited all the losers. Ben was out of town, in New York, and Stan was in Florida. Which leaves just Mike, Bev, Eddie, Bill, and Richie. Mike said he didn't want to go, that he wasn't up to sneaking around his grandpa. They respected that. Bev wasn't so understanding when Eddie and Richie said that they didn't want to go.

"You *have to!*" She shouted on the phone at Eddie, who was nervous just thinking about it.

“Why?” Eddie retorted, trying his best to hide the weariness in his voice.

“Because- it’s a *party*, Eddie. It’ll be fun. You can get super drunk or high, or crossfaded, it’ll be so much fun. Maybe you’ll meet someone!”

Eddie sighed. *I’ll never meet anyone, I’ve already met the only person I’d ever want to be with.* “I guess. But don’t expect me to stay.”

“Yes!” Bev cheered.

Richie was a tad bit easier to convince. As soon as Bev mentioned getting high, he was in.

And then there they were, Bev and Eddie in the front seat of Eddie’s car picking up Bill and Richie to go to the party.

Richie’s breath hitched when he was Eddie. Sometimes he forgot how fucking beautiful he was, and seeing him was just a shock of realization- *holy shit*. Richie stood outside of the car for a good thirty seconds, mouth open staring before Bill punched him and told him to get in. Richie’s face turned red as he obliged.

He tried his best not to have aneurism in the car, staring at the back of Eddie’s foot and shaking his leg so aggressively he wouldn’t have been surprised if the car burst open. It felt like Richie had burst open.

When they arrived at the party, Richie practically fell out of the car. Bill and he went off almost immediately, Richie almost running at this point, to find a bong and some weed. Which left Bev and Eddie in the dust.

Once they got out of earshot, Bill decided to ask. "Are you okay? You seem really out of it. Did something happen?"

Richie looked up at him for a split second, then went back to scanning for some familiar stoners. "No, nothing happened. All's good in Richieland!"

Bill sighed. "You know you can talk to me, right?"

"I know, of course I know that you idiot, but I just... Not right now. I can't."

Bill nodded, as his eyes finally landed on a small approachable group of people with a tricked-out bong. Bill grabbed Richie's arm and they made a B-line for it. Richie caught sight of it and cheered because he was that damn exited to get so shitfaced he wouldn't recognize Eddie at all.

Eddie was ready to leave twenty minutes in. He could see Richie from his spot on the wall, taking several hits with Bill and a small group of unfamiliar stoners. But Richie probably knew them. Richie knew everyone, it seemed like.

Eddie was standing off to the side of Bev, who was mixing their drinks.

“You okay? You’re super fidgety today,” Bev asked, glancing at him as she poured more vodka into her drink.

Eddie nodded. “Just stressed, or anxious, I don’t really know. I don’t think I want to talk about it.”

“Okay, but I’m here when you’re ready.”

Eddie nodded, smiling back as Bev handed him his cup. “Okay.” *I’ll never be ready, Richie’s way too damn beautiful and I don’t know what the fuck is going on here so how the hell could I talk about it?*

Hours passed. Eddie had made his way outside, sitting on the porch with his head in his hands, blissfully thinking about nothing. He was very exaggeratedly busy *not* thinking about Richie, or the way his heart burned whenever he thought about whatever-the-fuck-happened.

And he stayed that way for a long while, until he felt a presence beside him.

Eddie's heart did a whole floor routine. He looked up slowly, knowing who it was already. When would it ever be anyone else?

"Hi," Richie breathed, seeming sober enough, but eyes still red. He fidgeted with his hands like he always was when he was nervous about getting serious. Eddie's felt like he was having a heart attack

"Hi."

Richie sat awkwardly, tapping his foot, and digging at his nails, opening and closing his mouth while he was debating whether to say something or not. *God, even when he's stupid his still so ethereal.*

"Listen, I'm really sorry--"

"I don't want to talk about it." Eddie interrupted, cutting him off, slurring his words quite obnoxiously and he hadn't *meant* to say it like that but it was too late now.

Richie scoffed. "Don't want to talk about it, okay well I *need* to talk about it Eddie so let me apolo--"

"Stop!" Eddie shouted, stunning Richie. Eddie couldn't believe himself, but then again, he was so not ready for this conversation, so props to drunk Eddie.

Richie stood up. "Are you kidding me Eddie? Are you fucking

joking?”

“Go away,” Eddie grumbled, taking another drink out of his red solo cup.

“No, I’m tired of running from this. Eddie, I-“

“Shut up! I don’t want to hear it! Go away Richie!” He screamed, catching a few sideways glances from other intoxicated teens at the party.

Richie looked like he was about to cry. His eyes got bright red, his cheeks turned that shade of pink they always did, and it all seemed too fast and *fuck* Richie wished he wasn’t sober. First thing he was going for was vodka.

“Fuck you too Kaspbrak, fuck you too,” Richie cussed as he scurried out the back gate, deciding to start the walk home because he certainly wasn’t getting a ride from Eddie.

Eddie didn’t follow him.

His head spun. He didn’t realize he was sobbing, alone on the wooden porch of some stranger’s house, until Bill came in and scooped him up. Bill carried Eddie to Eddie’s car, laying him down in the backseat and tried to comfort him.

It was no use, Eddie kept hiccuping things about Richie; about how he wouldn't shut up and about his stupid eyes that were the color of Earth if you looked at it from space and about how every single of his dumbass freckles was a kiss from an angel and his dumb lips that were always chapped and why didn't he ever take care of himself? It was *then* Bill that understood what was going on between his friends, and he wondered how he hadn't put it together earlier.

Bill consoled him for the vast majority of an hour, before Bev appeared and Bill drove them all home. He made sure that Eddie found it safely back to his bed and put on music for him, something from Richie, labeled *kASSpbrak*.

Both Bev and Bill knew that their friends were broken beyond anything some meddling could fix. Neither knew what to do, so they let it be. They felt awful leaving Eddie alone at his house, but it wouldn't work if Bill or Bev came in and told him how stupid and blind he was being. Eddie would never believe them. And Richie? He was mad. And mad Richie wasn't calm down-able, not now or ever. (Unless, of course your name is Eddie Kaspbrak.)

It's four days later and it's hot. Like, desperately over the top unbearable hot. Melt in your own home hot.

Eddie feels sick. He feels awful. He wakes up to some music playing over the speaker and he decides to leave it be, blissfully enjoying one of Richie's favorite bands. He pretended like it didn't sting to think about Richie, that he couldn't remember what he'd said.

It didn't work.

He groaned, lying face down on his bed and questioned his existence. Was his life worth living if Richie wasn't in it? It almost wasn't. Eddie wasn't suicidal, but he was definitely not excited to live his life right now. And to top it all off, his head was pounding. He had the worst headache he's had in basically his whole life.

What a good way to start the day!

And just when he thought it couldn't get any worse, Eddie's mom entered the room.

"Turn this trash off Eddie! Nobody in this neighborhood wants to hear it!" She shouted over the music, which she easily could have switched off because it was right next to her.

"You do it, mom," Eddie grumbled, rolling around in bed.

After Sonia switched off the music, she looked around the room for other things she could get mad about. "Eddie! When was the last time you dusted?"

"Eddie, you know the way we fold clothes! What is this?!"

"Eddie! Is that... the lid to a yogurt? I cannot believe this!"

She yelled and yelled and yelled and nitpicked and Eddie followed orders, even though his head hurt like the seventh layer of hell. The shouting only made it ten times worse.

“Stop shouting! I have a headache! Jesus mom,” Eddie yelled, louder than Sonia was yelling, and with almost enough authority so she would believe him. But to no such avail, she only got madder and louder.

“You don’t get to be mad at me, Edward Kaspbrak. I gave birth to you. I raised you. I have always been there for you. Don’t you dare take me for granted!” As she got louder, and the throbbing in Eddie’s head got even harsher. He could barely hear himself think, so as the next thing he said tumbled out of his mouth, there was really no stopping it.

“You don’t get to treat me like a prisoner!”

As soon as Eddie said it he regretted it. Of course, he meant it, but he could tell just by hearing his moms *breathing* that he was about to get the punishment of his lifetime.

That’s when she hit him.

She slapped him, straight across the face, leaving a giant red handprint in his cheek.

“I love you sweetie, but don’t you dare think that ever again,” She threatened, then promptly stalked out of his bedroom, and locked it.

Eddie didn’t know how to feel. He thought about when Richie’s mom hit him, and Richie ran to his house and Richie’s hugs sounded so *good* right about now but he couldn’t. He’d fucked that up.

He let himself cry. He let himself sob. He let himself be hurt by his sadistic overbearing mother. He let himself be heartbroken over some stupid Trashmouth, lanky, awkward boy who he was in love with. He let himself break down.

And man, did it feel good to let himself be upset. He felt all the barriers he’d carefully set up in his mind come crash down and it was damn therapeutic. It’d been twenty minutes and he was still crying but it was good. It was so good.

So good, that he decided *fuck it*, and he had to see Richie.

He climbed out his window and jumped onto the ground with his car keys, eyes red and hands trembling. He shut all thoughts about Richie hating him out of his mind and turned his car on, ignoring his screaming mother chasing him down the street.

He speeds thirty miles over the speed limit to Richie’s house. His mind is racing and his heart is on the verge of thumping out of his chest. He doesn’t know what the hell he’s going to say, just that he has to be near Richie again and all he wants to do is be with him. He couldn’t control himself anymore. There was a physical need for his touch that Eddie couldn’t pretend he didn’t feel every single day.

He slammed on the breaks and did the worst parallel parking job that could've ever been imagined in front of Richie's house and ran to the front door, and began pounding on it pleadingly. He almost forgot that he was crying until he let out a sob when a minute passed and nobody opened the door.

Eddie rang the doorbell sporadically and almost didn't care about how rude he was being because *fuck* he missed Richie so much that his heart swelled and he couldn't breathe and- oh.

Richie swung the door open, his face stone cold, until he saw Eddie.

Eddie couldn't imagine what he looked like. He probably looked like he'd just been run over by a freight train. But he really couldn't seem to mind because Richie Tozier was standing right in front of him.

Without thinking, without asking, without wasting time, Eddie lunged forward and collapsed onto Richie. Eddie held on to Richie and let himself sink into him. Richie, almost timidly, wrapped his arms around the smaller boy, eventually pressing his hand onto the back of his head.

Eddie hadn't felt this warm in weeks. His insides felt calm, sedated almost. Even though his limbs were shaking and his body wracked with now lessening sobs, he felt fine. More than fine. He felt safe.

They stayed like that, clinging to each other, for what must have been ten minutes. Richie had wrapped himself so protectively around Eddie that it was almost difficult for Eddie to break apart.

“I’m so sorry,” Eddie choked out, looking at Richie once they’d separated. “I.. I don’t know why.. I just.. I’m so sorry Richie- I shouldn’t have-“

“Eddie!” Richie stopped him, so concerned and worried for what thoughts had been running through his head. “Eds don’t be sorry, it’s okay, really.”

Eddie let a tear drop from his eye and fall down his cheeks. “No it’s not okay at all Richie, I fucked up, I fucked up so bad and you don’t know how awful I feel and I can’t believe how fucking stupid I am to have dismissed you like that and I.. I don’t know what’s wrong with me but something is, somethings gone wrong in my brain Rich..”

Richie was stunned, his own eyes beginning to pool up. “Eddie, baby-“ He pulled him into another hug but this one was *different* and less frantic as Richie stroked his fingers through Eddie’s hair. “There’s nothing wrong with you. You’re perfect. You’re not stupid, okay?” Richie kissed the top of his head. “You’re not stupid.” ‘*I am.*’ Richie thought.

Eddie let out a breath of relief and buried his face into Richie’s neck. “I didn’t mean to barge in like that, really, mom was just yelling and it all just built up and I missed you so much.”

Richie brushed his fingers across Eddie’s cheeks. “I missed you too, Eds.”

As they eventually broke apart, Richie grabbed his hand and led them up to his room. He placed a cassette into his Walkman and pressed play, some slower songs coming on.

They sat across to each other on the bed, knees touching, hands intertwined. Richie is looking at Eddie like that again and Eddie is looking at him like that straight back. They're kind of just staring at each other in silence, trying to memorize freckle patterns and lip curves.

"Please never fight with me ever again, I can't do that," Richie whispered.

Eddie laughed. "I'm not planning on it."

Richie laughed too, and Eddie thought it was the most beautiful sound he'd ever heard, and Richie picked him up and made him lay down next on top of him. Richie stared down at their fingers and Eddie knew this wasn't platonic.

None of it was. Nothing between them was ever platonic. They'd never been friends, and Eddie could feel it.

But saying it made it *real*. Saying it made him a queer faggot and instantly put a special target on his forehead for the Bowers gang to jump at him. And that was terrifying. Sure, as hell Richie never confronted his feelings so Richie would never make the first move, and Eddie was too chicken to.

Neither of them said anything.

They continued to sit, in silence, Richie tracing uneven shapes onto the back of Eddie's hand as Eddie stared forward at the wall of Richie's room. Blissfully not acknowledging the feelings they knew they had for one another.

The losers hung out almost every other day for the rest of the summer. Whether it was getting high, swimming, county fair, watching movies, or just being in the presence of one another. Days where they didn't hang out, Richie and Eddie could still be found with one another. They stayed inside most of the time, staring at each other, and bickering like grandparents.

Eddie felt bliss with Richie. No matter how annoying or crude his comments became, the feeling he got when Richie's face lit up every time Eddie gave him a good clap-back to his jokes or cracked and laughed at one was the most livid thing Eddie had ever felt. Richie Tozier might be a broken boy with lots of flaws and record breaking low self-esteem, but all Eddie ever saw whenever he looked at Richie was a goddamn angelic being.

They plowed through a whole month and a half of summer of awesome nights and warm mornings and unspoken things before it started to get weird again.

It was a Sunday. Eddie had driven to Richie's house, promptly at 1 o'clock. Richie, being as forgetful as he is, forgot to buy milk that week.

“Richie, you don’t have any milk?” Eddie asked, searching the fridge for a carton of a drink he knew Richie drank so often he could own cattle.

“What?” Richie stood up, walking towards the fridge. “How? I thought I bought some?”

Eddie hummed as Richie put his head on his shoulder, reaching his arms around Eddie to look in the fridge. “Guess not, idiot,” Eddie said fondly.

“Well,” Richie latched onto Eddie’s hand and spun him around, already taking small steps to the counter where Eddie’s keys were. “I should probably go get some, drive me?”

Eddie rolled his eyes. “Pay me for gas, asshole.”

Richie laughed as they held hands all the way to the car, only breaking apart when they had to go to separate sides. Eddie put the keys into the ignition and turned them, the car making a low roar as it turned on.

“Put your seat-belt on,” Eddie instructed. Richie looked up at him, before nodding and clicking himself in.

“Love it when you give me orders like that.”

“Yeah, so does your sister,” Eddie replied almost instinctively. Richie snorted as he rolled down the window.

The grocery store was close to Richie’s house, just outside the neighborhood. They were there in almost no time. Eddie took his time parking, making sure he was perfectly even between the lines before he stepped out of the car. Richie followed behind him, skipping towards the doors.

Richie walked quickly towards the milk aisle, Eddie left trailing behind him with his shorter legs. When he finally caught up, Richie had three whole cartons of milk in his hand. “Eddie, my good fellow, be dear and hold two? I need to grab some apple juice too.”

Eddie huffed and took two milk jugs, watching as Richie picked up an apple juice container.

“Don’t you want to check the expiration dates?”

“No, I live on the edge.”

“You live like an idiot.”

“I’m wounded Eds, kiss it better?”

“Don’t call me that, and no, I will not kiss your fake wound.”

“Gosh darn Eddie, I guess I’ll just die right here,” Richie said as he laid down on the ground, putting his hand over his heart and making gestures as if he was pretending that his heart was gushing open.

Eddie looked around, thankful nobody else was on the isle. “Richie! You’re making a scene.”

“Kiss it better- Eddie- not much time- left,” Richie mock chocked out. He really was going to make Eddie do this.

Eddie sighed, praying to God that nobody was around still, crouched down and picked up Richie’s hand. He gave a quick peck to the back of it, hoping it would be enough to satisfy his friend.

It seemed like it, when Richie stopped shaking his body and grabbed on to Eddie’s hand, using Eddie to pull himself off of the ground. Neither of them said anything if they held on a little too long.

Richie pushed the cart back to the check-out, Eddie walking alongside the front and steering whenever Richie veered off course. They got in line, and Eddie put back most of the gum and candy bars that Richie had set down in their cart. He really couldn’t help himself.

“Hi! Just these four?” The cashier asked, motioning to the milk and orange juice.

“Yes sir,” Eddie replied, putting the last Reese’s back into its hole. Richie pouted, but Eddie just hit his face lightly, to which the taller boy just scrunched up his chin and tried not to smile. Richie pulled out a ten dollar bill and handed it to the cashier, then picked up two milk jugs and began walking towards the car.

As Eddie picked up the last two, he looked back to the cashier who was looking at him with admiration. “Just so you know,” the stranger started, “I am in full support of your lifestyle. I think that’s really cool how secure you guys are!”

It took a minute for it to click in Eddie’s head what he meant. But once it did, Eddie was a blushing, blubbering mess. “Oh, um, see, we’re- we’re not together like that- haha, thank you though- um, yeah, okay bye now,” Eddie spit out each word with a newfound level of fear.

How many people a day assumed they were together? I mean they weren’t exactly single, but they weren’t together- and oh my God he’d come out to the whole damn town on accident.

By the time Eddie reached his car and unlocked it, Richie knew something was wrong. Richie always knew. He could read Eddie like a fucking book and it sucked because he could never lie to him. And he really wanted to lie right now.

“Eds? What’s wrong?”

Eddie made eye contact with Richie for a brief millisecond, not being able to comprehend the worry in Richie's eyes. "Oh. Um, nothing. Don't call me that."

"Bullshit."

Eddie sat down in the driver's seat, turning his head slowly to look at Richie. Richie was concerned, and slightly upset that Eddie wouldn't just tell him what's wrong outright. Eddie took a deep breath.

"Just- the cashier, he thought... He thought were- that we were... together."

Richie stopped looking upset, and his face burned red. "Oh." Was all he said, turning his head to face the road and not looking back at Eddie again.

Eddie drove Richie home, but didn't get out of the car. He couldn't be around Richie right now. It was too much. They weren't together and everyone thought that they were, but they couldn't be. Eddie's mom would disown him and Eddie would be homeless, and then they would get beat up even more on the regular and they would even get beat up *together*. They'd have to hide and Eddie never wanted to hide, he wanted to climb on top of the old astronomy tower in Derry and shout as loud as he could that he was in love with Richie Tozier.

He sat in his room in silence, not being able to look at his mom. His mom, who didn't know how much she really hated her son because she didn't know him. She didn't know him at all.

More of his summer homework got done, and then he showered and scrubbed himself until his skin began to bleed on his thighs and he pinched his wrist every time he thought about Richie. He couldn't breathe.

'*Oh.*' Oh? What the fuck was that supposed to mean? Did Richie feel the same way about hiding? Did the cashier assuming they were together do more than embarrass him? Did he think of Eddie like Eddie thought of him? Guess he'll never know, because all he said was *oh*.

So, Eddie decided to sleep, because he couldn't fucking process anything Richie ever did and he wondered again why he dreamt of his skin and his hair and how his lips must feel.

Richie feels like shit.

He already felt like shit, because he made Eddie get all flustered because he looked at him too fondly around that cashier. He fucked that up, once again. He'd felt like shit for the whole week since it happened. The losers called him and they hung out, but Eddie was nowhere to be seen. He had avoided Richie the whole week and Richie could barely live life without his snappy, short, clean best friend who he wanted to kiss every part of.

And just when he thought that it couldn't get any worse, the doorbell rang.

Richie's heart beat out of his chest. It wasn't Eddie, Eddie would call before or he would just walk in. This was someone else. He dreaded who it could be.

And of course, when he opened the door, it was who he dreaded seeing most. Maggie Tozier, his mom, stood in front of him, all high and mighty, already starting on a bottle of whiskey. She pushed past him, and dropped her bag down on the floor of the living room.

"Ah, good to be home. How was it while I was gone, Rich?" She asked, just like they were old pals and Richie was doing his best not to scream because she couldn't even make it two hours out of rehab without drinking.

"Um, it's good."

Richie tried to turn away. He tried to leave his mom and ignore everything she said to and or about him, he really did. He wanted to run as far away as possible, to anywhere else, to Eddie, to the most far possible place from her.

He tried.

"Hey, why're you and that Kaspbrak kid faggin around in these pictures? You know we don't condone that in this family, Richard, no queers," She slurred bluntly, the whiskey already setting in.

Tears pricked at the corners of his eyes. He couldn't breathe.

That was the exact moment where he decided he couldn't do this anymore.

Maybe it was just him trying to tell his mom a big 'fuck you', or maybe it was just that he couldn't handle his mom without Eddie. Maybe it was just time.

He ran to Eddie's house. No, sprinted. Bikes would take too long. His head spun, the whole world seem to have sped up in time and it all seemed to be crashing together. The rain started as just light tapping on Richie's curls, but built up to where he could barely see. His whole life felt like it had led up to this.

He was born for Eddie Kaspbrak. Like wasn't worth living if he lived without that tiny, soft, sassy ball of brown freckles and fluffy hair and eyes. He felt like he was flying. He didn't feel real. His skin felt tingly and he wanted desperately just to hop out of his body.

There wasn't a plan. Richie felt like he was following instinct, as he pushed through the rain and through Eddie's back door, Sonia Kaspbrak yelling at him as he tracked mud and water from the door to Eddie's room. But that didn't matter at all. He could barely even register that she was there.

The only thing that mattered, the only thing that had ever mattered, was Eddie.

Richie pushed the door to Eddie's room open, to find Eddie on the other side, probably going downstairs to see what his mom was shouting about.

The world, the storm, the galaxy; stopped colliding. It froze. For just a second. Richie's heart didn't beat. Eddie's didn't either.

"Richie, what're you doing h-" Eddie begun, but was cut off very shortly.

Eddie could see on Richie's face what he was doing. He felt the universe stop. He didn't know if he was entirely ready, but he had to be, this was Richie.

As Richie lurched forward, he stopped millimeters before Eddie's lips. Eddie knew that this was what he wanted, what he'd always wanted, so he closed his eyes and closed the tiny gap between their lips.

It wasn't either of their first kisses. They knew how to kiss. But neither of them seemed to remember, so they just stood there, tears falling from their eyes with their lips connected as the universe went from frozen to recreating the big bang. Eddie couldn't think.

But just as soon as it started, it stopped. Richie disconnected his lips and ran out of Eddie's house as fast as humanly possible, leaving Eddie light headed and completely upside down.

Eddie wouldn't have Richie run away from him this time.

He followed him, down the stairs and out the door and he chased him. Down the street and to the park where Richie had finally stopped, not expecting to turn around and feel Eddie's full force knock into him and wrap their whole bodies together.

Eddie sobbed into Richie's shoulder, his whole-body wracking with relief and love and pure adrenaline. Richie held him, loosely at first but eventually tighter than his cells held onto one another.

"I love you, I love you so fucking much," Eddie exasperated, leaning his head back and putting his hand on Richie's cheek so he could hold his face.

It was still storming, Richie finally noticed, not completely focused on the sobbing beautiful boy who had fallen into his arms. He only noticed because of how he could barely hear him over the sound of the wind crashing, and the fact that he could barely see ten feet out.

"I love you too, so fucking much, and I always have and I always will."

Eddie felt like he'd just been reborn. He felt like this was a second life. He felt like he wasn't even real. But at the same time, this was the most real he'd ever felt. "Always," He whispered, before kissing him for the second time.

This kiss was different. They moved their lips against one another, kissing like they had a whole 16 years of their life to make up for.

And they did. But, they had the whole rest of their lives to kiss each other.

So as Eddie and Richie kissed, they started laughing. At how dumb they were, at how scared they were but this seemed to be the least scary thing he could ever do. Richie wanted to feel this way for the rest of his life.

And every morning, when Richie woke up and looked at his boyfriend, fiancée, and eventually husband; he did. He felt that fuzzy, warm, easy feeling every single day for the rest of his entire life.

He couldn't have asked God for any better life, or any better person to spend it with.

Author's Note:

okay hi, i've never written anything remotely this long before but here we are! also i haven't posted in like, 8 months but that's okay :) if my longest fic ever should be anything, it deserves to be these two.

find me on twitter @willbhyers, or on instagram @uhargent.

kudos and comments are much appreciated!